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ABSTRACT

Preliminary results of an ongoing investigation of the effects of regular school placement on hearing impaired children in Skane, Sweden, are reported. A pilot survey of about 20 pupils, their parents, teachers, and headmasters was conducted for the purpose of developing a questionnaire. Questionnaires were sent to parents, teachers, and headmasters. Pupils have been interviewed. Initial observations include the following: (1) owing to poor acoustics, many pupils seem more disturbed than helped by audiological equipment; (2) teaching situations in which the hearing impaired pupil cannot hear what classmates are saying are accepted as a matter of course; (3) hearing impaired pupils frequently have to carry a teacher's microphone and other bulky equipment from one classroom to another; and (4) insufficient attention has been paid to the problems of pupils with one sided deafness, who do not usually wear hearing aids. The project is currently involved in observations, combined with videorecordings of the school situation of a limited number of pupils and a followup of pupils who have discontinued or concluded their schooling and of a limited number of hearing impaired adults. (DB)

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Title of project	Integration of the profoundly deaf and severely hearing impaired in ordinary classes.
Project no.	2153
In progress at	Department of Educational and Psychological Research, Malmö School of Education
Research supervisor	Ass Prof Kerstin Nordén
Project director	Kerstin Nordén
Expert adviser	Tore Äng
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1. BACKGROUND

Measures of reform in the school sector during the past few decades have reflected an endeavour to eliminate discriminatory categorizations and to reduce the gaps between different pupil groups. All pupils should receive their instruction within the framework of the regular school system, and special measures, insofar as they are required, must be defined on the basis of the needs of the individual pupil and not with reference to a "handicap group". The aim is to counteract tendencies towards isolation and ostracism and eventually to give everybody the chance of independent membership of a democratic society. The Curriculum stresses the responsibility of schools for their pupils' personal development, and the Education Act defines the objective as being that of "in co-operation with homes furthering the development of pupils into balanced individuals and competent and responsible members of society".

Impaired hearing is a handicap when dealing with other people, owing to the great extent to which our social existence is based on conversation, in which the spoken language presupposes a constant interpretation of auditory stimuli. Hearing impairment is customarily designated a communication handicap. A person who has a mild/moderate hearing loss or who is good at lip reading and/or is unusually skilful in utilizing his residual hearing can cope well in colloquial communication with one or two other persons at a time, but in a larger group he will usually find it impossible to keep up. He then suffers from what has come to be termed "social deafness" and is excluded from the group's conversation. A hearing impaired pupil in an ordinary class finds himself in a situation which causes social deafness. Instead of becoming "integrated" he may experience such discouraging communication difficulties as to suffer social isolation.

Although the integration of hearing impaired pupils is relatively advanced in Sweden, we know very little about the practical results of their school placement. A general survey (Hammarstedt & Amcoff, 1979)[x] furnishes information concerning the number of hearing impaired pupils in the country as a whole and concerning types of school placement, but we do not have any clear picture of the local organization of the teaching situation or of the way in which individual pupils experience their school conditions.

A review of the international literature concerning the integration of the hearing impaired reveals a host of different organization and planning programmes. On the other hand, reports concerning evaluations and the effects of practical measures are few and far between, added to which the vagueness and/or variable criteria of different evaluations make the findings hard to interpret and preclude comparisons. One of the abiding impressions left by the review of literature is that of many critical objections to individual integration as a principle and demands for the careful preparation, planning and follow-up of school placements.

2. PURPOSE

To collect information concerning the school situation and social conditions of integrated pupils,

to elucidate problems at different age levels, especially in connection with transitions from one level to another,

to ascertain the long-term effects of school placement, from the point of view of the hearing impaired in adult life,

to furnish documentation on which to base a practical policy programme, insofar as such a programme is needed.

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x) Hammarstedt, B. & Amcoff, S. Integration of deaf and partially hearing pupils in elementary school. Uppsala: The Samspec Project, 1979. (In Swedish)

3. DELIMITATION OF THE SURVEY POPULATION

The project was initiated by the NBE primarily in order to investigate the situation of pupils with a severe to profound hearing loss who had been placed in ordinary school classes. It was already clear at the planning stage, however, that there would be difficulties involved in drawing a line between mild/moderate and severe/profound hearing impairments, owing to the absence of completely reliable criteria.

3.1 The audiogram

The common measure of the degree of hearing impairment is the tonal audiogram, which supplies information concerning the capacity for apprehending sounds (tones) within different frequency ranges.

An audiogram serves an important purpose in establishing whether a person's hearing is impaired, but it does not furnish reliable information concerning the degree of hearing function within a group of hearing impaired persons, especially if the description of hearing impairment is based on an audiometric average. More dependable information is obtained by grouping audiograms according to threshold areas, but here again, tonal audiograms furnish unreliable information concerning ability of speech sound discrimination. Martony[x] (1975) and Risberg[xx] (1979) show that great variations can be found among hearing impaired subjects with equivalent audiograms. Children with the same hearing impairment can display completely different difficulties in connection with speech and language learning. This may of course be due to disturbances in the central nervous system, differences of ability and motivation and so forth, but it may also be due to their hearing, despite the similarity

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x) Martony, J. On the speech perception of the deaf and very hard of hearing. Stockholm, Royal Institute of Technology, 1975. (In Swedish)

xx) Risberg, A. Determination of hearing capacity and speech perception capacity in connection with grave hearing damage. Stockholm, Royal Institute of Technology, 1979. (In Swedish)

of the audiograms, having completely different properties. The tonal audiogram only tells us how much a signal has to be amplified in order for the hearing impaired individual to perceive that there is a sound. In order for a hearing impaired person to learn to apprehend speech, his auditory sense must also permit him to perceive various characteristics of the signal, for example whether it is a high or low frequency sound, its duration, whether its pitch is constant or changes with the passing of time, and so on.

3.2 Distinction between the hard of hearing and the deaf

When attempting to distinguishing the "deaf" as a group from the "hard of hearing", the degree of linguistic handicap, in a hearing company is a usual criterion.

Hard of hearing:
Persons are usually said to be hard of hearing if they have been able to develop speech and language with the aid of their hearing but are dependent on technical aids and favourable external circumstances in order to utilize their hearing residuals. Usually this group is also taken to include persons without functional hearing residuals who have suffered profound hearing impairment later in life, after the acquirement of language.

Deaf:
Persons defined as deaf by the organisations of the deaf people are the prelingually deaf, i.e. they have a profound hearing loss present since birth or from the earliest childhood. Their hearing loss virtually prevents auditory contact with their environment even with the help of a hearing aid. The language development of these children has to proceed with the aid of vision; they are dependent on sign language communication and need to be given an early opportunity of using signs in order to avoid serious delays in their linguistic and social development.

Persons afflicted by childhood deafness suffer from a unique handicap. Insofar as they have been given the opportunity of sign language communication, they differ from other groups with communication handicaps in their ability to communicate freely with each other but not with outsiders. They are not handicapped within their own groups.

3.3 The survey population

Since it is hard to find reliable criteria concerning the degree of hearing impairment, and since there is no hard and fast boundary in schools today between individual integration and placement in a special group, it was decided that the inquiry would include all users of hearing aids in elementary and upper secondary schools.

The purpose of the inquiry is to penetrate the situation of deaf and partially hearing pupils thoroughly. This calls for a limited population, and the Province of Skåne (population about 1 million) was taken as the geographical area for the inquiry. All hearing aid users there who are attending ordinary schools have been included in the inquiry, except for external special school classes and pupils enrolled with mental care boards.

The project started in the autumn term 1978 and will be concluded in the school year 1981/82. It comprises hearing aid users born between 1961 and 1971, regardless of whether they are at school or have completed/discontinued their education.[x)]

In addition to these age group cohorts, a limited number of hearing impaired adults, former integrated pupils, will be interviewed for their viewpoints concerning their schooling and their present situation.

x) Data concerning hearing aid users have been obtained from the service centres at the hospital audiological departments. About 250 persons are involved. Some of them state that they do not need hearing aids, and it is therefore a debatable point whether they should be included in the inquiry.

4. METHOD AND IMPLEMENTATION

The inquiry is being conducted in various stages.

A. A pilot survey of about 20 pupils, their parents, teachers and headmasters, for the collection of data on which to base a questionnaire. The pupils included in the pilot survey represented various school levels and were divided between sparsely populated rural areas and urban communities.

B. Questionnaires addressed to parents, teachers and headmasters, and interviews of all pupils. Informal talks with school staff during visits to schools in order to interview pupils.

C. Observations, combined with video recordings of the school situation of a limited number of pupils.

D. Follow-up of pupils who have discontinued/concluded their schooling and of a limited number of hearing impaired adults.

Stages A and B have been completed, except for follow-up activities of a number of parents who did not reply to the questionnaire.

The inquiry has consistently met with a highly favourable response. In the pilot survey, all the persons approached consented to be interviewed. The response frequency for the questionnaires is unusually high - between 85 and 94 per cent for the various groups - despite the large number of items which had to be completed. Headmasters and teachers not replying to the questionnaire have been contacted, and answers of one kind or another have been obtained from all the persons approached, except for one school with two pupils, where the headmaster and teachers declined to answer on the grounds that this was not part of their duties.

All parents were informed in advance of the interviews with their children. In nine cases parents refused to allow their children to be contacted at school, the reason given in all of

these cases being that they did not want their children to incur special attention. In addition to these nine pupils there were two who could not be reached because of their "irregular attendance", and one immigrant pupil who declined to be interviewed.

The project has now entered stage C, which has been planned as a validation of the other data collected. During work on these intensive observations we are also finding unique opportunities of carrying out detailed analyses of the conditions creating problems for hearing impaired pupils and the factors contributing towards satisfactory school placement.

In connection with stage C, field experiments with simulated hearing loss are planned for teachers and classmates of hearing impaired pupils.

5. SOME OBSERVATIONS

At the present stage of the inquiry, pending the structuring and processing of data, it is impossible to present any findings, but the experience we have gained so far occasions a number of critical observations.

It has been difficult to procure current data concerning school placement. The audiological centres, which offer services to schools, are not systematically informed of transfers. The school previously attended by a pupil is often unable to supply correct information concerning his new placement. Clearly there is a very great need for changes in the school placement of hearing impaired pupils to be registered, for example, with the county education committee, so as to prevent pupils from "disappearing" in connection with changes of school or the discontinuation of their studies.

Owing to poor acoustics, many pupils seem more disturbed than helped by audiological equipment.

Teaching situations in which the hearing impaired pupil cannot hear what the classmates are saying are accepted as a matter of course.

Not unfrequently hearing impaired pupils have to carry a teacher's microphone, and sometimes also bulky amplifiers, from one classroom to another and check that the batteries are charged. This does not facilitate participation in the activities of their classmates.

Insufficient attention has been paid to the problems of pupils with onesided deafness, who do not usually wear hearing aids.

Interview data and replies to questionnaires have further underlined the necessity of the observations now in progress of the school situation of individual pupils in a bid to assess the correspondence between actual conditions and the data from questionnaires and interviews.

6. INFORMATION AND LIAISON ACTIVITIES

The following are among the contexts in which information has been disseminated concerning the project.
Nordic conference at the Fredericia Special School, Denmark, 1979. One-day courses for teachers whose groups include/are to include hearing impaired pupils.
In-service-training days for teachers of hearing impaired pupils.
Regional conferences for planning the instruction of the hearing impaired.
Conferences for heads of schools for the deaf in the Nordic countries, 1979.
Conferences arranged by the Government Committee of Enquiry into the Integration of Handicapped Pupils.

Conference of the national organization of the youth section of the Association of the Hard of Hearing, Borås, Sweden, 1979.

Swedish Audiology Day, Stockholm, 1979.

Project day on integration for trainee remedial teachers, Stockholm, 1979.

Conference of the school group of the National Swedish Association of Deaf People, 1979.

Course for parents in the County of Kristianstad, 1980.

National conference of audiological advisers, 1980.

Seminar on the Education of Handicapped Children, Vancouver, June 1980.

Lecture by Tore Äng: School placement of hearing impaired students.

REPORTS:

Nordén, K. & Äng, T. School placement of deaf and hard of hearing children. What do we know about integration?

NBE report Dnr L78:700. Research and development concerning the integration of handicapped children in the general school system. Stockholm, 1979.
An English translation of the NBE report is available.

Nordén, K. & Äng, T. Integration of hearing impaired pupils in schools. Audio-Nytt, No. 1, 1980. (In Swedish)